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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: The first speaker is the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Madagascar, His Excellency Mr. Herizo Razafimahaleo.

Before I give the floor to the Minister I would like to apologize to him, since he was not able to address the General Assembly in the morning session. I am very grateful to him for agreeing to make his statement this afternoon.

Mr. Razafimahaleo (Madagascar): The success of a session of our General Assembly lies heavily with its President, the chief catalyser and conductor of our work during the session; with the state of affairs left by his predecessor; and, of course, with the capacity of the whole United Nations Organization to implement in a credible, coherent and sustainable way the various decisions, resolutions and recommendations made by the General Assembly.

It is therefore a pleasure for me to express to you, Sir, on behalf of the Republic of Madagascar, our warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of the present fifty-second session of our General Assembly. Please be assured of our support and of our conviction that your proven experience in international affairs is definitely a major asset towards the success of your mission.

We would also like to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Resale Ismaili, whose commitment during his tenure we admired and whose work and achievements make up a solid foundation on which this and upcoming sessions will build and further construct.

Last but not least, I should like to reaffirm our strong praise and encouragement for our Secretary-General and his staff for their highly laudable work on proposed reforms of the United Nations aimed at making our Organization an even more credible and efficient body, capable of meeting the challenge of the next century. It would thus be a matter of legitimate pride to realize at the end of this process that major and positive United Nations reforms would have been achieved under the tenure of a native African Secretary-General.

(spoke in French)

There is no doubt that the question of United Nations reform, which has been of concern to us more particularly since the middle of July last and which has figured prominently in most of the statements made during the general debate, is not only making the fifty-second session of the General Assembly seem like a hive of feverish activity leading up to major events but also is lending it a special character that will remain in the annals of the Organization because of the importance of the stakes for all of humankind.

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It is a starting point for this necessary process to find answers to our aspirations for the future of our Organization, following the solemn commitment made here two years ago by our Heads of State and Government, in the framework of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, to work jointly to promote peace, development, equality, justice and understanding among peoples.

This reform process should reflect the changes and profound upheavals that have taken place in the world and that have made it necessary for our Organization to adapt itself and its structures to the new realities of the world in which we live — a world characterized by an upsurge in globalization and by greater interdependence among nations. The free movement of goods, people, capital and information has increased. Technological progress is making it possible to transmit and disseminate ideas, cultures and lifestyles.

Some developing countries have undergone rapid economic growth and have become integrated into the dynamic current of the world economy. Others — and unfortunately there are far too many of them — have experienced slow or even negative growth and have been marginalized in the globalization process. Poverty and famine still affect a considerable number of people. The figures speak for themselves: at a time when some people are privileged enough to surf the Internat to do their shopping, 800 million others go hungry every day — that according to a report of the Food and Agriculture Organization at the World Food Summit last November. And that is to say nothing of illness, illiteracy or violence.

The basic principles that have given impetus to this process of renewal include good governance, sound management, transparency and the democratization of international relations. In this respect, Madagascar cannot but welcome this innovative approach because it is based on the same values and the same ideals underlying my Government's quest for social and economic progress, whose goal is to provide a higher standard of living for the Malagasy people in conditions of greater freedom.

Indeed, we in Madagascar hope to ensure that the observance of human rights, social justice, participation by all in national development efforts, the implementation of economic reforms and the practice of democracy do not remain mere political slogans but are put into practice. As the representative of a Government born of a democratic change of power seven months ago, I know what I am talking about.

At this stage of the considerations presented by our Secretary-General, certain points are noteworthy. Among those I would refer specifically to restructuring, financial reform and the Security Council.

With respect to restructuring, it is clear that efforts must be made to merge agencies of the United Nations system in order to ensure improved efficiency and better coordination. An example would be to merge into a single unit in Geneva the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights in order to strengthen complementarity in related activities of our Organization.

My country believes that we must increase transparency and create a culture of shared savings, which a reform of the Centre's administration would bring about — this with the aim of avoiding by every possible means the non-observance of democracy, which is the fundamental reason for serious human rights violations throughout the world. Likewise, humanitarian relief, which the United Nations continues to provide to countries that are facing natural disasters, would become more effective with the creation of an office for the coordination of emergency situation efforts, complemented by an appropriate intervention mechanism.

I take this opportunity to convey my country's gratitude to those who did not hesitate to assist Madagascar in our efforts to deal with the locust invasion in the southern part of the island. I would mention in particular the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme, the United States Agency for International Development and the World Bank, as well as friendly countries — Japan, Germany, France, Norway and the United Kingdom, among others.

My delegation, which welcomes the strengthening of certain United Nations activities and the inclusion of new priorities, agrees with the conclusions of the fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights, according to which human rights are inseparable from the promotion of peace, security, economic prosperity and social equity.

It reaffirms, therefore, that the work of the United Nations in the area of human rights must be considered as an element of the Organization's activities in the field of preventive diplomacy, and that United Nations operations to monitor the observance of human rights

must promote respect for these rights in order to be able to restore social stability and assist in the reconstruction and recovery of societies following periods of conflict.

In this regard, the restructuring of the Secretariat should take into account all approaches to human rights, in accordance with the outcome of the Vienna Conference, which, as we know, proclaimed the interdependence and indivisibility of human rights as well as the promotion of the right to development.

My delegation, however, would appeal for greater vigilance on the question of human rights, bearing in mind that on 10 December we shall begin to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in view of the possible consequences of international oversight of human rights for the sovereignty of States, particularly when this involves monitoring measures and even conditionality, under the guise of humanitarian concerns.

Reform must not be reduced to a simple cost-cutting exercise; rather, it must strengthen the role of the Organization and above all enhance its efficiency. Hence Madagascar recognizes the need to strengthen the role of the General Assembly, which we feel must remain the primary forum for States to discuss essential issues of peace, security and development. At a time when the virtues of democratization are preached, the General Assembly is the only body capable of guaranteeing that as many people as possible can make their voices heard at the world level and play an effective part in the management of international affairs.

The Charter could therefore be amended to give greater power to the General Assembly, so that it might play a bigger role alongside the Security Council, particularly in the maintenance of peace. We therefore support the Secretary-General's initiative to set up a ministerial commission to consider the possible changes.

On financial reform, many eminent speakers — I would refer in particular to the Prime Minister of Pakistan — have stated in this debate that one of the main weaknesses of the United Nations stems from the fact that while some Members are supposed to pay their assessments in full and without conditions, others delay payment, making it contingent on one reason or another, whether stated or not.

Madagascar appeals for what I would call a code of good conduct or financial civic-mindedness, in order to remedy this situation. We support the principle that the financing of the United Nations must be an integral part of the reform process. Moreover, the scale of assessments, the key to the apportionment of expenses, must reflect the capacity of each State to pay, as it is applied in most, if not all world organizations, on the basis of equity, pure and simple. It is clear to us that the scale cannot be set in stone and that there should be provision for amendment when necessary — that is, when there is a change in a country's capacity to pay.

Finally, we welcome the desire of the Secretary-General to allocate more predictable resources to finance development, to ensure an overall increase in official development assistance and to create an Office for Development Financing to allocate to developing countries what have been described as the dividends of reform.

In regard to the Security Council, it would be putting it mildly to say that its present membership no longer reflects reality. To speak of our continent alone, Africa has the greatest number of Member States of the United Nations, and yet the continent has no permanent seat on the Security Council. Nor was the continent even consulted or considered at the time of the first review of the Council in 1965.

Madagascar endorses the position of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and would opt for an expansion of Security Council membership based on democratization, transparency and equitable geographical representation. An increase in number and an improvement in the Council's functioning and working methods, as well as its relations with States that are not members of the Council, are essential in order to reflect the present reality, and above all to allow the United Nations to lend an attentive ear to the problems of the poor and less favoured countries. In addition, relations between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council must be strengthened, so that decisions on international peace and security can take into account social factors.

In this regard, my delegation welcomes the decision of the sub-working group of the African Group, chaired by Egypt, which is considering the modalities for implementing a rotation system for two permanent seats which could be allocated to Africa, called for in the Harare Declaration of the summit of Heads of State and Government of the OAU.

We feel that the veto must not be considered separately from the question of expanding the membership of the Council. Moreover, given the principles of democracy supported by the international community as a whole, it would be logical to extend the right of veto to all permanent members, or simply to abolish it.

In addition, we emphatically reaffirm that any question relating to reform of the Security Council must be subject to a two-thirds majority vote of Member States, in accordance with the provisions of Article 18 of the Charter. Any initiative to submit a simple resolution running counter to that would be prejudicial to the Organization and to its Members.

The 15 priority areas on which the Secretary-General has taken action and made recommendations respond to the demands of today's world. My delegation is certain that the substantive comments and proposals of the General Assembly will help implement the initiatives taken, so that our Organization can keep pace with the demands of our time and, above all, live up to the expectations of our people. In any event, Madagascar, within the framework of the regional forums to which it belongs, is considering the proposals of the Secretary-General in a spirit of constructive dialogue and without preconceptions.

However, I cannot speak of international peace and security without expressing my concern at the slow pace of negotiations leading to general agreement on every aspect of Security Council reform. We are concerned because, despite the establishment of a Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation, announced in the package of reforms, the Council will still remain, under the Charter, the body entrusted with maintaining international peace and security. However, the Malagasy Government welcomes the fact that cooperation between the United Nations and the OAU with regard to peace was mentioned in the Secretary-General's report to the fifty-second session, as well as in statements made last Thursday at the ministerial meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Africa. We are pleased to note the determination of the Secretary-General to increase this cooperation and extend it to all activities related to the maintenance of peace, including conflict prevention. In this area, we welcome the Secretary-General's plan to appoint a representative based in Addis Ababa. It is important here to emphasize the importance not only of combining, but also coordinating, the efforts of the OAU — which has a central Mechanism for Conflict Prevention Management and Resolution — with those of the Security Council, so that we do not work at cross-purposes. Here I would like to recall that the OAU welcomed the principle of strengthening African peacekeeping capacity, which France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America have jointly proposed to assist.

My delegation welcomes the negotiations to date on nuclear disarmament measures and on limiting and gradually reducing conventional weapons and in particular anti-personnel mines. On this last point, Madagascar has voted in favour of General Assembly resolutions on a moratorium on the export of mines. We welcome the agreement drafted in Oslo on the text of a convention for the complete elimination of anti-personnel mines, as well as Norway's commitment to provide $100 million for demining activities and assistance to victims.

In this respect, my country appeals to States with military arsenals to continue resolutely to take measures aimed at general and complete disarmament. The participation of all States in this process of disarmament, in cooperation with the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation, whose establishment is part of the reform programme, will provide an invaluable contribution to the easing of global tensions.

This international determination will also be a source of mutual assistance and cooperation in combating organized transnational crime. Transnational criminal organizations have, in fact, existed for a long time, but the globalization of international relations with regard to the economy, commerce, telecommunications and the rapid progress of technology, as well as the disappearance of ideological blocs, have permitted the activities of transnational criminal organizations to expand and have increased their power to such an extent that they are now a permanent threat to the foundation and internal security of States, to their cultural and artistic heritage and to the environment of the planet. Today we are witnessing the emergence of new forms of transnational crime: money-laundering or the investment of capital generated by activities that are usually interconnected, including drug-trafficking, corruption, traffic in weapons, terrorism, traffic in nuclear and toxic material, traffic in protected natural resources, traffic in human beings, removal of organs, and more.

From this standpoint, the countries that are weakest in terms of economic, institutional, material and technological capacity are the most vulnerable — developing countries in general and African countries in particular — because the automatic effect of the activities of developed countries to prevent and combat organized

crime is to condemn such countries to becoming new zones of expansion.

We must therefore urgently find an effective response to this threat by defining a common objective based on a united stand and coherent action, by establishing or strengthening cooperation for exchanging experience and knowledge, by increasing our exchange of information and, above all, by actively promoting and supporting cooperation with international or regional forums so as to provide institutional technical assistance and logistical support. That notwithstanding, we note the special importance attributed by the Secretary-General to the need to improve the capacity of the system to combat drug-trafficking and terrorism.

Peace is, with development, one of the main missions of the United Nations. My country reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the principle of settling disputes peacefully. It is deeply concerned by the threats to destabilize peace in the world, especially in Africa.

With regard to the Republic of Congo, therefore, Madagascar appeals to the parties to develop a dialogue aimed at a definitive ceasefire, in accordance with the spirit of the Libreville Summit, held on 14 and 15 September 1997, and at allowing the deployment, under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), of the international intervention force recommended at the Summit.

As for the internal crisis in the Comoros, which is an immediate neighbour of Madagascar, we support of the efforts of the Secretary-General of the OAU as well as those of the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Furthermore, we reaffirm our support of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros with regard to sovereignty and territorial integrity. In this respect we support the convening of an international conference to restore peace in that sister Republic, and we have expressed the readiness of Madagascar to become involved in any initiatives along these lines.

Also in Africa, Madagascar welcomes the establishment of direct talks between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front, which recently culminated in the Houston Agreement, as a result of the mediation of James Baker. We believe this to be a major landmark on the path to the settlement of the question of Western Sahara, which has gone on for too long.

In the Middle East, Madagascar also strongly appeals to the parties concerned to safeguard the progress achieved in the peace process. We believe that an essential element for this is for Israel to halt the establishment of new settlements.

Finally, we reaffirm our support for the concept of the reunification of Korea and welcome the progress that is starting to appear in this regard.

During the course of the United Nations conferences on human rights, the environment, population, social development, women, etc., we succeeded in achieving important global commitments, and we must ensure the follow-up. We have achieved an international consensus on the need to ensure that ecological realities and priorities for environmental policies are taken into account in structural changes that are in progress in the international economic order. To be more specific, we must integrate environmental factors — a precondition for sustainable development — into economic priorities. In this regard Madagascar encourages the efforts already undertaken by international development finance organizations and by Governments. We are convinced that the overall implementation of the provisions in the basic Agenda 21 document for rapid and specific action will come to fruition in the recommendations of the Secretary-General as contained in his programme for reform.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to recall my comments at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, on an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21. While reaffirming our full adherence to the principles of mutual interest and the shared but differentiated responsibilities of developed and developing countries contained in the Rio Declaration, and to its general implementation, we requested, first, that developed countries honour the commitments undertaken in Rio to devote 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to development assistance. Secondly, we requested that the Global Environment Facility be restructured and adequately replenished so as to facilitate access to resources; and thirdly and above all, that, following the concept of the "democracy dividend" and the "economic adjustment and reform dividend", an "environment dividend" should be advocated for the least developed countries to enable them to protect their environment and thereby speed up the eradication of poverty, the main cause and consequence of environmental degradation.

We now ask whether the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in its present form has the necessary power to impose sanctions or to grant dividends, or whether we need to strengthen its mandate or create a new structure with adequate power.

For its part, Madagascar — we cannot repeat this often enough — is proud to comply with the measures recommended in Agenda 21. Indeed, it stands out in its capacity as a country that is both a nature sanctuary and a natural sanctuary, possessing treasures and specific characteristics that are rare, if not unique in the world, in terms of flora and fauna.

We hope that in Kyoto in December firm commitments will be made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which cause global warming and thereby contribute to the further deterioration of our environment.

It rests only with us to make this session a session of reform, as the Secretary-General wishes, or to make it a session like so many others — one in which speakers assail us with rhetoric or at best with verbal promises that are not followed up with actions. Madagascar is convinced that we will make the right choice at the right time to consolidate our ideals.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jordan, His Excellency Mr. Fayez Tarawneh.

Mr. Tarawneh (Jordan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to begin my statement by congratulating you, Mr. President, and the Government and people of your friendly country on your election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. I am quite confident that you will conduct the proceedings of this session efficiently and competently, given your renowned skill and experience in both diplomatic and international affairs.

I would also like to express our utmost appreciation and gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for his successful and distinguished management of the affairs of the fifty-first session which has just ended.

It is also my pleasure heartily to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his election to the office of Secretary-General of the United Nations at the beginning of this year. I wish him success and wish our Organization progress and prosperity under his leadership.

Since the start of the peace process in the Middle East, Jordan has carefully upheld the purposes and terms of reference of this process, which began in Madrid in 1991 with the participation of all the concerned parties. Since recovering its territory and water under the peace treaty signed with Israel in October 1994, Jordan has maintained its pivotal role in the process and continued its efforts with the other parties to achieve the desired goals of establishing a just, comprehensive and lasting peace which will be accepted, preserved and protected by future generations. We fully believe that the durability of peace is closely tied to the need for it to be just and comprehensive. We understand comprehensiveness in its broadest sense, namely, all parties to the conflict without exception must be involved and all aspects of the conflict must be dealt with, whether its inherent causes or those which have evolved and been aggravated over the years and during the various phases of the conflict.

Jordan has always emphasized its adherence to Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), as the basic terms of reference for the peace process, in addition to the principle of handing back occupied Arab territory in return for peace. Based on this and on relevant United Nations resolutions, legitimacy and justice, we call for the resumption of negotiations on the Syrian-Israeli track and the Lebanese-Israeli track. We have also made and continue to make our best efforts to achieve the implementation of the transitional phase agreements and go on to the final status negotiations on the Palestinian track. We do this out of our firm conviction that the peace process will not attain comprehensiveness nor justice unless the Israelis and Palestinians arrive at a just solution for the question of Palestine, including the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people and the establishment of their independent State on their national territory.

Jerusalem, the city of peace, which is the seat of the Holy Places of the three heavenly religions, and to which the hearts of believers the world over turn, deserves our utmost attention, with a view to reaching a satisfactory solution that ensures to all freedom of access to the Holy Places, preserves the holy character of the city and keeps it as a symbol of peace among peoples across the world. We affirm that East Jerusalem is an occupied Palestinian Arab city to which Security Council resolution 242 (1967) applies, as it applies to all occupied Arab territories.

If the security problem is a major obstacle to peace, confidence-building and peacemaking are the best means to achieve individual and regional security as well as stability in the Middle East. There is no peace without security and no security without peace.

Accordingly, we would like from this international rostrum to call upon Israel — the State with which we have concluded a peace treaty — to do everything possible to build and consolidate confidence with the peoples of the region in general and the Palestinian people in particular. A first step toward that would be to abandon, in its dealing with security matters, the language of force, the language of siege and restrictions on the livelihood of the Palestinian people. At the same time, Israel must abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention by abandoning the settlement policy and the policy of creating a new fait accompli on Palestinian territory, including its attempts to change the demographic structure and the religious, historical and cultural character of the occupied territories, including Jerusalem. We also call upon Israel to implement the agreements concluded with the Palestinian side in letter and spirit as soon as possible, for delay and siege will create a state of despair in which it becomes impossible to control extremism and prevent it from wreaking havoc on security and stability. Extremism undoubtedly finds in these policies a fertile ground for the achievement of its anti-peace objectives.

On the other hand, in order to build confidence with the Governments and peoples of the region, Israel has to abandon the production and development of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. All the Middle East States, except Israel, have become parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The whole world recognizes that the current situation in the region is indeed a unique situation unparalleled in other regions of the world. A single State has a monopoly of nuclear capabilities, while the other States of the region are bound by treaties and international law.

Because the presence of nuclear weapons is a major obstacle preventing the peace process from reaching its goals, the ideal solution for this problem would be to remove this obstacle by establishing in the Middle East a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction.

In this context, permit me to announce the decision of the Government of Jordan to accede to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. This decision was motivated by Jordan's belief that weapons, including all weapons of mass destruction, do not establish security nor restore stability to the Middle East region or to any region in the world unless there is full confidence among its Governments and peoples.

The Iraqis no longer see any ray of hope of ending their continuous suffering caused by the embargo that has been imposed on them for the last seven years. Iraqis have suffered enough and tasted enough bitter pain. It is high time that our international Organization moved to alleviate their suffering and dress their wounds, so that they may recover their livelihood and contribute anew to the development and prosperity of the region.

In issuing this serious and sincere call for the lifting of the embargo imposed on the people of Iraq, we would like to reaffirm that it is necessary to preserve Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We also call upon the Iraqi Government fully to implement all Security Council resolutions and to do its best to reach a solution for the problem of Kuwaiti prisoners and missing persons, to pave the way for the reestablishment of normal and friendly relations among the States of the region on the basis of mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States.

Just as the Iraqi people are suffering from the blockade, so are the Libyan people. Since the sanctions were imposed on Libya, the Libyan people have been suffering from a ban on flights. We therefore call for a peaceful settlement of the problem arising from the Lockerbie tragedy within a framework of international law and legitimacy.

We call upon Iran to enter into serious negotiations with the sisterly United Arab Emirates in order to reach a peaceful solution, ensuring the return of the three occupied islands, Abu Musa and the Greater and the Lesser Tunb, to the United Arab Emirates, which would effectively contribute to the establishment of peace, security and stability in the Gulf region.

Since war began in the former Yugoslavia, Jordan has joined its voice to those of all the States that called for an end to the suffering of the people of the nascent Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, suffering that shocked the conscience of the whole world and moved the international community, which had held high hopes following the conclusion of the Dayton Peace Agreement. We now reaffirm that peace, security and stability in

Bosnia — and, indeed, throughout the Balkans — depend largely on the full and honest implementation of that Agreement. A strong international commitment is also essential for making the peace process an irreversible reality. The international community must do what is incumbent upon it in this regard, including providing effective assistance for reconstruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina and ensuring the effective management of public enterprises as provided in the Dayton Agreement. This would have an important impact on the preservation of Bosnia's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The problem of Palestinian refugees, the resolution of which has been left to the final status negotiations, is one of the most intricate problems faced by the Middle East region. However, the international community, regrettably, does not accord this problem the attention that it deserves. The financial crisis which grips the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been escalating year after year without a solution being found. UNRWA has been forced this year to announce austerity measures entailing a large reduction in services offered to the Palestinian refugees, including the immediate cessation of the scholarships funded from the regular budget; the elimination of all medical compensation and referral to hospitals during the last two months of this year; the freezing of emergency cash assistance and shelter rehabilitation from the regular budget; a freeze on the creation of new posts, international as well as local; the suspension of recruitment of international staff; the suspension of appointments to local posts, with the exception of those considered essential for the continuation of operations; and a plan to consider collecting fees from students in UNRWA's areas of operation.

Although all those measures have been put on hold following pledges by certain donor countries during their meeting with UNRWA and host countries, held recently in Amman, to increase their voluntary contributions by an amount sufficient to cover this year's deficit, which amounts to $20 million, the danger of cutting services remains as long as no final solution has been found, taking into consideration the need to meet the requirements of natural population growth among refugees and inflation rates.

Since the beginning of the refugee tragedy more than five decades ago, Jordan has borne the heaviest burden of all the host countries. The number of refugees in Jordan is 1.5 million, 20 per cent of whom live in refugee camps serviced by UNRWA and the rest of whom are scattered throughout Jordanian cities and villages. Out of its sense of humanitarian responsibility, the Government of Jordan has provided all services needed by the refugees, including infrastructure, education, health and welfare services and financial support, in addition to public security and civil defence services. Thus, Jordan, despite its scarce resources and limited means, spends approximately $340 million annually on services provided to refugees, an amount almost equal to UNRWA's total budget. That is not all. The Government of Jordan has also developed this year a strategic plan, a so-called social security package designed to develop infrastructure for refugee camps and disadvantaged areas, to provide sustainable development and to reduce poverty. The total share of refugee camps in this plan comes to nearly $240 million, which will be allocated to the rehabilitation of water systems, solid waste treatment, sewerage systems, water purification plants, road and electricity projects and the provision of essential public services.

While Jordan affirms that improving the standards of living for the Palestinian refugees does not diminish their political right to return and compensation, as provided for in General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948, it reaffirms that the support of UNRWA is a collective responsibility of the international community. It also stresses the legal, political and humanitarian dimensions of the refugee question and considers that any failure to discharge the humanitarian responsibility for this question would negatively reflect on political responsibility.

My country therefore affirms from this rostrum the need to take serious and sincere action and to make every effort to continue the services provided by UNRWA to Palestinian refugees until a lasting, just and comprehensive solution to their problem is reached. We also call for the abandonment of any attempts to abolish UNRWA, suspend its operations, reduce the services it provides to refugees or turn its mandates and responsibilities over to any other agency, for that would have a negative impact on the political and legal dimensions of the refugee question. It would also have a negative impact on the peace process and stability in the region.

We call for compliance with the letter and spirit of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948 on the question of refugees, as well as with Security Council resolution 237 (1967), which calls for facilitation of the return of displaced persons. We call upon donor countries to fulfil their commitments to UNRWA and increase their contributions to an extent commensurate with the natural

increase in the numbers of refugees. We also call upon the international community in general, and potential donors in particular, to give due attention to this matter.

The refugee problem reminds us of international humanitarian law in general and the need for its full application in particular. This subject has always been one of interest to Jordan. Since 1981, Jordan has been submitting a draft resolution to the Third Committee entitled, "A new international humanitarian order", which calls for respect for the full application of international humanitarian law. My Government has also amended Jordanian laws to give priority and immense importance to the application of this law. I would recall here the appeal by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Jordan to work hard with the international community to bring into existence a new international humanitarian order.

The report of the Secretary-General entitled, "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform", which he submitted last July, constitutes a good basis for the reform process and a studied plan for the future, embodying a serious and real desire for change for the better.

The report reviews the main strategic functions of the Organization and provides for each of them specific proposals charting the way and making Member States real partners in achieving an Organization better prepared to deal with humanitarian and political crises; based on greater efficiency; qualified to play a more vital role in the areas specified by the Charter; and made imperative by the changing security, economic, social and political circumstances of this world. Jordan calls for opening membership of the United Nations to all peace-loving States, in accordance with Article 4 (1) of the Charter, in order to achieve the universality of the Charter.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, while fully appreciating the good efforts of the Secretary-General in preparing his plan, stresses the fact that the purpose of reform is not confined to cutting costs or dealing with unwieldiness. It goes far beyond that to reactivate the role of the Organization to discharge its responsibilities and carry out its functions with a high degree of efficiency, transparency and credibility. We agree with the Secretary-General that reform is not an isolated event, but a continuing process that does not stop at the implementation of the proposals contained in the report. It extends to encompassing the general direction in which the Organization will evolve as a result of the implementation of the proposals.

The coming century will witness deeper and quicker global changes. The United Nations must be prepared to deal with these changes in the five major areas corresponding to the main mandates of the United Nations: peace and security, economic and social affairs, development cooperation, humanitarian affairs and human rights.

In the area of international peace and security, we find that the multiplicity and diversity of armed conflicts in the post-cold-war era have made the Security Council a hub of international efforts to establish peace and security throughout the world. This makes it very important to restructure and reform the Council. The Security Council, established after the Second World War, does not reflect the balance of power prevalent in today's world. It has become necessary to review its structure and rules of procedure. The Working Group on the restructuring and reform of the Security Council has made tireless efforts over the past few years to achieve this purpose.

There are many useful and feasible concepts that have appeared in the context of reform. What has been lacking so far is the collective political will to translate these concepts into reality. In this regard, Jordan feels that any new restructuring of the Security Council must take into account the representation of the developing countries throughout the globe. We feel that the Arab Group, in view of its major and effective role, is entitled to a permanent seat on the Security Council.

There is no doubt that the United Nations peacekeeping operations will continue to be one of the most important activities of the Organization in enhancing international peace and security. Driven by its belief in this noble aim, Jordan has, on the direction of its Hashemite leadership, participated for many years in these activities to the extent that, at one point, its contribution ranked second among all the troop-contributing countries.

I must, however, point to the financial difficulties faced by some troop-contributing States, including Jordan, as a result of the financial crisis gripping the Organization, because reimbursements have not been made in a timely manner. I appeal from this rostrum to all Member States to pay their assessed contributions to the Organization without condition, in full and on time.

Moreover, Jordan has participated in the United Nations stand-by arrangements. It was the first country to

sign a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations under this system. It also participated effectively in crystallizing the idea of establishing a rapidly deployable mission headquarters to contribute to enhancing the Organization's ability to respond rapidly to crises as they occur.

As for disarmament and arms control, the progress witnessed by the world during the past few years is really encouraging. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons has been extended indefinitely and is now approaching universality. Last year, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was concluded, in addition to other significant achievements in the reduction of the nuclear-weapon arsenals of the United States and the Russian Federation. All eyes are now set on the Conference on Disarmament in the hopes of seeing it crown its achievements with a treaty banning the production of fissionable materials used in the manufacture of nuclear weapons and another providing full security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Since development in the economic and social fields is one of the primary objectives of the United Nations, serious attention must be directed towards reform of United Nations organs functioning in these two spheres, foremost among them the Economic and Social Council. This reform should enhance international cooperation in setting forth effective national policies aimed at advancing growth in all Member States with no exceptions.

The most important characteristics of the world economy, as we stand on the threshold of the twenty-first century, are two: first is the global transition to market economy, and second is the rapid technical development of communication and information technology, making knowledge the most important factor of production. The new world economy is also characterized by intense competitiveness, speed, the intensive use of information and increasing globalization.

We must, however, consider how we can find the means to avoid the negative effects of globalization, represented by the marginalization of some developing countries, because of their declining exports and an increase in their external indebtedness, and of social groups in these countries as a result of the inequitable distribution of income. Globalization is not concerned with the problems of distribution, but with being a prime mover of economic growth in general.

In view of this situation, the industrialized countries are called upon to increase their official development assistance to the developing world, to find comprehensive solutions to the problem of external indebtedness, to integrate the developing countries into the world's free-trade system and to improve these countries' terms of trade.

Jordan, as a developing country, has suffered economic problems since the end of the 1980s, which were aggravated by the Gulf crisis and the Gulf War early in this decade. By pursuing structural adjustment policies, however, with the assistance of the International Monetary Fund, Jordan was able to achieve very good results that exceeded expectations. The budget deficit was substantially reduced, as was the size of external debt. All macroeconomic indicators have improved.

Substantial progress has been achieved in the area of privatization and the reform of internal financial regulations and the banking sector, which gave the private sector a chance to participate effectively. Jordan has gone ahead on the way to development. It has initialled a partnership agreement with Europe and is now taking the preparatory measures needed to join the World Trade Organization (WTO). To that end, we are doing our best to adjust our economy and prepare it for full integration in the global free-trade system.

In association with our Arab brethren and other countries in the Middle East, we are making tremendous efforts to widen the area of cooperation, trade and investment in the region. We have succeeded in attracting substantial investments in the stock exchange and other industrial and tourist projects. The Government of Jordan is working hard to remove the remaining restrictions which limited the inflow of regional and global investments, including lifting all restrictions on foreign currencies.

The world recognizes the historical responsibility that we assume towards future generations to preserve a sound global environment, in compliance with the principles adopted by the Earth Summit. In spite of its scarce resources, Jordan is committed to applying the Rio principles and is working hard to make its contribution as a partner with other countries of the world in sustainable development.

Although we are committed, as a developing country, to doing what is required of us by virtue of this partnership, we, along with other developing countries,

have noticed regression and procrastination by developed countries in discharging their obligations under this partnership. We have also felt that the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly was held to consecrate this regression in the discharge of obligations, rather than to enhance them and to cooperate in carrying out those not yet implemented.

In conclusion, if the establishment of peace, security and stability in this world is one of the noble purposes of our international Organization, we must provide the solid ground for that, which is to reduce poverty, control diseases, illiteracy and unemployment and work towards the creation of a clean environment and sustainable development for future generations.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Fathulla Jameel.

Mr. Jameel (Maldives): First of all, Sir, let me congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. Your election is a reflection of the confidence and the hope that this body has in your abilities to guide this session to a successful conclusion.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's profound gratitude and appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the exemplary manner in which he carried out his responsibilities and steered the work of the General Assembly during his term as President.

It is also my privilege to take this opportunity to extend, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, a very warm welcome to the new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. We have no doubt that his long experience as an international civil servant and his vast knowledge of the United Nations system will give him all the insights he requires for carrying out his responsibilities fairly and firmly. He deserves every assistance and support from all Member States of the Organization.

With great enthusiasm for capitalizing on the opportunities created by the end of the cold war, we embarked on a journey to revitalize the United Nations and to reform the way it functions, making it more effective and capable of playing the central role it is entitled to in maintaining the world order, and perhaps shaping a new world order for the future.

However, as the discussions continue, the views remain far from consensus, even on the single issue of restructuring the Security Council, which I agree is important and pivotal. But at this point we should remind ourselves that in our approach to reform we should be covering the whole spectrum of political, social, economic and legal activities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

It is rather disappointing that the focus is at present mainly on the restructuring of the Security Council. Furthermore, the proposals made so far on this issue are sadly inadequate, and many suggest the creation of a new form of idiosyncrasy.

In the absence of a formula which is comprehensive and just, we may as well suggest the following.

First, increase the number of non-permanent members in the Council to an appropriate level, reflecting the growth of the membership and its present diversity.

Secondly, amend paragraph 2 of Article 23 of the Charter to enable the non-permanent member States to be re-elected for any number of consecutive terms, so that those who seek to occupy a seat in this important body on a continuing basis can do so as long as they enjoy the confidence and support of the Member States.

Thirdly, encourage the permanent members of the Security Council to agree among themselves on an accord which will remove or at least minimize the common apprehension arising from the fear of their misusing the veto power.

My delegation applauds the efforts of the Secretary-General to bring much needed reforms to the administrative and financial functioning of the Organization. The proposals that he submitted to the Assembly on 16 July 1997 deserve our careful consideration, as they contain far-reaching and constructive arrangements which will at least help the United Nations emerge from its present difficulties.

The enthusiasm which followed the end of the cold war also provided us the opportunity to meet in several international conferences to deal with some of the issues of true concern to all of us. These issues include the environment, social development, population, women, human settlements and food security. At those meetings we adopted ambitious action plans, reaching the conclusion that sustainable development should be the

core of the achievement of our objectives. Yet without the genuine and sincere will of the international community to honour their commitments, the action plans, which bear enormous price tags, cannot be implemented effectively.

This stark truth dominated the special session of the General Assembly in June this year, when we noted the lack of progress in the international action called for in the historic Agenda 21 of the 1992 Earth Summit.

The emission of greenhouse gases is continuing unabated, polluting the environment and warming the global atmosphere more and more. If the latest predictions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on greenhouse-gas emissions and global warming were to come true, then by the year 2100 almost 80 per cent of the low-lying island countries, including my own, would be submerged in the sea.

For the Maldives and other small island developing States, which are most affected by the degradation of the world's environment, the lack of progress in international action is most lamentable. We are not only fearful of an impending danger, we are also anxious that unless the world acts now and swiftly, it may be too late for us to avoid environmental catastrophe.

If we care to halt and reverse this lurking threat, we need the unwavering commitment and cooperation of the entire international community. And there is nothing we can do on our own.

Ever since my President, Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, apprised this Assembly in 1987 of the impending environmental disaster that rising sea levels posed to our country, the Maldives has been warning vigorously, at national, regional and international levels, of this problem.

Today I am happy to state that at the national level we are continuing successfully to create environmental awareness by involving non-governmental organizations and the private sector. We have also successfully implemented a few projects to protect and preserve the environment. For instance, under the two-million-tree national programme the people of the Maldives have planted eight trees per person in the last two years. I wonder what a spectacular impact we could have on our planet if we could plant eight trees per person in the entire world over the next two years.

At the regional level, the Delhi Declaration of the Environment Ministers of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) stands as testimony to our regional efforts. The Declaration, which reflected the common position of our region on global environmental issues, was presented to this Assembly by President Gayoom at its nineteenth special session. Another important meeting of SAARC environment ministers is scheduled to be held this month in the Maldives.

At the international level, we are working closely with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) to pursue our cause. We attach the utmost importance to the swift and steady implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and once again we call upon the developed countries to fulfil their commitments and pledges of support.

In this connection, we call upon the industrialized countries to follow the examples set by the United Kingdom and the European Union during the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly and to commit themselves to legally binding and meaningful targets to reduce their greenhouse-gas emission levels.

For the Maldives, a country that will be affected severely, if not fatally, by climate change, it is hard to accept a target below the 20 per cent reduction level by the year 2005, as contained in the AOSIS protocol, as a meaningful reduction.

Last month the Maldives hosted the thirteenth session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climatic Change, which was regarded not only as a very important meeting on the subject, but also a very timely one, as the world is looking forward eagerly and with great optimism to the forthcoming third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Kyoto.

My country and many other small States in the developing world, especially those among the least developed countries, have placed our trust in the United Nations to help us face and overcome the inherent constraints we have as we continue our quest towards progress and prosperity. We also look to the United Nations to develop policies and take effective measures to protect us from threats, whether economic or political, and alleviate our sufferings from environmental calamities. The fact is that we cannot on our own face the odds and that our economies are more vulnerable than those of larger and more prosperous States. Protection of the weaker should not be seen as a burden, but rather as

a shared responsibility of all, recognizing the realities of our diversified membership in this Organization.

While liberalization of the world economy may have boosted the prospects for some of the developing countries to successfully integrate themselves into the new international trading arrangements, those with little access to the world market, capital and new technologies find themselves becoming marginalized, away from the mainstream of the world economy.

The gap between the rich and the poor is continuing to grow unabated. Several developing countries, and particularly the least developed of them, still continue to suffer from endemic poverty, which is compounded by the severe debt burden and leads to political and economic dislocation.

The overall decline in official development assistance over the years has aggravated the conditions of the least developed countries. Unless the developed countries fulfil their commitment to reach the United Nations accepted target of dedicating 0.7 per cent of gross national product to official development assistance and intensify their efforts to reverse the present downward trend, hopes for the least developed countries will remain as grim as ever.

The Committee for Development Planning, at its thirty-first session, held in May this year, proposed in its report that the Maldives be graduated from the least developed countries list at the time of the next review in the year 2000, if we continue to prosper at the present rate.

We are overwhelmed to see our development efforts being rewarded with a decision of expulsion. Over the years, my country has successfully cleared numerous hurdles in the path of socio-economic development, despite its limited resources. We were able to improve the per capita income, raise the standard of living of the people and provide basic services to the community and individuals at higher levels than many others in the least developed country category.

This success was in large measure due to the stable political climate that we enjoyed, which in turn provided us the opportunity to implement carefully planned, action-oriented policies and strategies. At the same time, we could not have achieved these happy results without the support we received from friendly countries and multilateral organizations.

However, if one were to consider these few achievements against the background of an extremely fragile economy deprived of natural resources, and a high dependency on tourism and fisheries — both of which are susceptible to global economic change and environmental and other external factors — the whole scenario could easily change from a happy and promising one to an obscure and insecure one. The vulnerability of our economy compels us to continue to depend on external resources, to build infrastructures that we cannot build on our own and to develop our own needed human resources for further development.

Furthermore, the smallness of our countries has also made us vulnerable to the activities of drug-trafficking, money-laundering, terrorism and other forms of organized crime carried out by criminals who are looking for new territories to operate from. We therefore need to remain close to our development partners in a relationship of trust, which is far beyond kindness and charity. Therefore, my delegation would like to stress the importance of developing and applying a vulnerability index for the small island developing States as a basic and meaningful criterion for determining the status of least developed countries, recalling the content and the spirit of resolution 51/183.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Qatar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I cannot overemphasize the important role that the regional organizations are playing in international relations: fostering mutual trust and understanding and opening up greater prospects for the promotion of peace, stability and socio-economic cooperation within the region.

The activities of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), to which my country proudly belongs, are no exception. In fact, I am happy to state that the ninth SAARC summit, held in the Maldives in May this year, has adopted far-reaching and bold initiatives that will bring the countries of South Asia closer to each other and enhance further cooperation between them in the economic and technical fields. Among other important decisions, we have pledged to eradicate poverty from our region as early as possible, preferably by the year 2002. We have joined hands to accelerate our efforts to achieve trade liberalization and establish a free-trade area by the year 2001. We have also, for the first time, decided to begin informal political consultations in order to enhance and foster good-

neighbourly relations, relieve tension and build trust and confidence between and among Member States.

The alarming level of tension that exists on the international political scene is of utmost concern to us. In the recent past, we have witnessed in various regions of the world the reigniting of old conflicts the emergence of new and serious ones that possess the intensity to stretch the United Nations to its limits.

The dangerous developments unfolding in the region of the Middle East have brought into question once again the credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations. The present Israeli Government's arrogance towards and utter disregard for United Nations resolutions and the agreements that they themselves reached with the Palestinians under the Oslo accords have shattered the little hope that the people of Israel, Palestine and the international community at large had for a lasting solution to this age-old conflict. Recent events have drastically diminished the confidence that is so essential for the success of the process, leaving us to wonder if peace will ever come to this region.

The General Assembly met twice in emergency session this year to consider the issue. At those sessions, the international community almost unanimously rallied behind the Middle East peace process and demonstrated its genuine and unwavering support. While my delegation fully shares the view that continued negotiations in good faith between the two parties is essential for a permanent solution to the conflict, we strongly believe that the United Nations also has an important and crucial role to play in the peace process. The decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council must be respected and fully implemented without any preconditions. We call on both parties to respect the agreements reached so far and to exercise maximum restraint in resorting to activities that may undermine the peace process.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina may have faded a little from the headlines of the international press, but we must realize that our job will not be complete unless and until the perpetrators of genocide and other brutal crimes in that country are brought to justice.

In the field of disarmament and arms control, the international community has achieved considerable success. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention are testimony to this. The Maldives attaches utmost importance to the efforts of global and regional disarmament and arms control, and vehemently supports them. It was in this spirit that we signed the CTBT two days ago.

Contrary to our expectations, the era of peace and economic prosperity of the post-cold-war era has so far proved elusive. Outbreaks of violence and ethnic strife in several parts of the world have precipitated unbelievable levels of human suffering. Conflicts within States have crossed national boundaries and ignited conflicts of international proportions. Unless the United Nations is equipped to act swiftly on such symptoms of rupture, large numbers of people will remain in the shadow of conflicts. We should redouble our efforts to deliver on the promise of peace, human rights, fundamental freedoms and economic prosperity contained in the Charter of this Organization.

The United Nations should not be solely a political forum. It was meant to cover the wide spectrum of all human activities with institutions for social as well as economic matters. The disparities vividly observed around the world, a half century after the creation of the United Nations, prove that none of the institutions has diminished in importance. They were created to remedy these imbalances among States and to contribute to justice, equality and peace. They were established to build and consolidate a climate of cooperation, to help each other on the basis of moral and ethical obligations and not merely of charity. They were erected to help the poor — not just some of them, while neglecting others; to help children — not just some of them, while neglecting others; to consolidate human rights — not just some aspects of it, while neglecting others; and to further peace and prosperity for all mankind — not just for certain segments of humanity.

If we want the United Nations to perform the duties that we have entrusted to it, then we should ensure that we honour our financial obligations to it. My delegation is convinced that without a firm and sound financial footing, even our reform efforts will be totally meaningless.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I call on The Honourable Patteson Oti, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Solomon Islands.

Mr. Oti (Solomon Islands): Eight weeks ago, the people of Solomon Islands elected a new Parliament that

brought to office the "Alliance for Change", a reform-oriented Government committed to revitalizing the nation and its economy. Programmes to fulfil the public's desire for sustainable development are being designed and implemented with professionalism, transparency, accountability and due respect for traditional values.

The demand for change is being heard in the villages and towns of Solomon Islands, as it is elsewhere. Change for the better, however, is not easily achieved. It requires people with vision and the judgment and courage to inspire productive action. The United Nations and the General Assembly are blessed with such people. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in less than 10 months in office, has demonstrated insight and a refreshing openness that is felt throughout the Organization. His proposals to create a more effective and efficient United Nations are having a significant impact on our efforts here. The Solomon Islands delegation will work to achieve the consensus his programme for reform needs.

Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, brings to the presidency of the General Assembly more than a decade of experience at the United Nations and participation in the historic political and economic transformation of his country. In this time of change at the United Nations, his diplomatic skills will prove indispensable.

As President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, Malaysia's Ambassador Razali Ismail provided enthusiastic leadership and challenging proposals that helped advance the reform process. We thank him.

Solomon Islands gratefully recognizes the debt owed to the people of the Secretariat, the specialized agencies, the assistance programmes, the humanitarian and peacekeeping operations of the Organization and allies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross. Often working under difficult and even dangerous conditions, these men and women are heroes of our time. They will continue to have our full support.

The extraordinary and rapid changes with which this century is ending understandably fuel uncertainty and fear of the future as we participate in the transformation of the world through international communications, commerce and law, as well as medicine, science and technology. Even humankind's successful venture into outer space draws doubters and critics alike. During the last years of the nineteenth century, rapid scientific and technological innovation, armed conflict and the migration of vast numbers of people generated uncertainty and the fear of civilization's decline among the influential circles of Europe. Intellectuals wrote about the ongoing degeneration of humankind and envisioned cataclysmic wars.

In the twentieth century brutal local and global conflicts, the development and use of the cruellest weapons, the attempted extermination of entire peoples and a seemingly endless cold war gave credibility to the nightmare visions of that earlier generation. We are now engaged in the difficult process of understanding and transforming this legacy of horror into something we can use for humankind's benefit. In this effort the United Nations is vital.

Solomon Islands welcomes the adoption of the Agenda for Development and looks forward to the conclusion of the discussion of the scale of assessments and the issue of the capacity to pay. For the small developing States, an effective and financially stable United Nations that meets the challenges of development, as well as of the Organization's other core activities, remains critical.

The Solomon Islands Government supports the Secretary-General's programme of reform. We have no illusions, however, that it will be easy for the Member States to reach a consensus on its adoption. Certain controversial proposals face intense debate, but we are confident that the outcome of our deliberations will benefit all. These discussions should take place in only one forum so that small delegations such as my own can fully participate.

In an ideal United Nations, the future design of the Security Council could be characterized as "equality of membership, yes; the veto, no". Political reality, however, requires another approach. The Security Council should be expanded, with permanent and non-permanent seats for developed and developing States. Solomon Islands will give serious consideration to permanent membership for Germany, Japan and several developing countries. Since the present permanent members insist on retaining the veto, it must be restricted to questions relating to Chapter VII of the Charter.

Solomon Islands and other States in the great continent of Oceania are especially sensitive to environmental change. Our commitment to the principles of the Rio Declaration and the objectives of Agenda 21 is reflected in Solomon Islands' ratification of the

Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We vigorously support the Alliance of Small Island States draft protocol to the Framework Convention, and we will continue in the joint effort towards the achievement of a legally binding instrument to be negotiated in Kyoto this December. We are moving quickly to enact legislation that will enable Solomon Islands to meet its obligations under the Climate Change Convention.

Solomon Islands, which has ratified the Convention on the Law of the Sea, is committed to the adoption of a seabed mining code with strong provisions for protecting the marine environment. In 1998 we will actively participate in the International Year of the Ocean.

We are committed to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. Of special concern to us is the transport, dumping or storage of radioactive and other dangerous wastes in the Pacific region. Solomon Islands has signed the Waigani Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and the Nouméa Convention to protect the region's marine and terrestrial environments. For these and similar treaties, it is important that relevant international standards be met by the responsible parties.

Solomon Islands, which has ratified the Treaty of Rarotonga, continues to support the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere, as well as similar zones elsewhere. We worked closely with Marshall Islands and Western Samoa in arguing before the International Court of Justice that the use of any nuclear weapon would violate international and humanitarian law. Our position was largely upheld by the landmark advisory opinion the Court handed down last year. We were pleased to co-sponsor General Assembly resolution 51/45 M in support of the International Court of Justice opinion. Solomon Islands continues its call for the creation of a forum of non-nuclear-weapon States. The forum, committed to the elimination of all nuclear weapons, and in keeping with the Court's advisory opinion, would seek agreement on a unified approach to the full implementation of Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and would monitor progress towards that goal.

Solomon Islands, which has closely followed the Ottawa process, will enthusiastically sign the treaty banning anti-personnel landmines. We thank Canada for this initiative. Recognition must also be given to the International Committee of the Red Cross and several non-governmental organizations for their efforts.

A deadly legacy of the Second World War continues to haunt the Solomon Islands. Over 100 ships laden with fuel and unexploded munitions rest on the bottom of our channels and on land. A large number of unexploded bombs still litter our shores. The leaking fuel contaminates fish breeding grounds and affects the aquatic food chain. Estimates of the costs of clearance run to $1 billion or more, but a thorough technical and financial assessment of the problem is required. Those countries that waged war in the Solomon Islands have a responsibility to assist us.

Recognizing the need to restructure the Solomon Islands economy, my Government is closely reviewing several key areas, such as public expenditure, banking and the taxation regime. We will seek assistance from the international lending agencies and the developed countries. To meet the demands of globalization, we are undertaking the expansion of investment and trade.

With 80 per cent of its population of under 400,000 living in rural settings on hundreds of islands dispersed over 1,600 kilometres of ocean, Solomon Islands is using a village-centred development strategy that is democratic in origin and operation and sensitive to the cultural values of an ethnically and linguistically diverse people. My Government is placing increased emphasis on education and recreation for women and youth, who comprise three quarters of our population. Formal as well as informal programmes are being used to foster the study of agriculture, biology and other sciences, health care, appropriate technologies and the humanities. We are committed to upgrading the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education and transforming it into our National University.

The Government is also focusing on programmes to increase agricultural productivity through research and better land use. We are pursuing policies to promote livestock development and aquaculture. Fishing remains a vital industry for us, and Solomon Islands has ratified the Agreement on the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

Over half of my Government's revenue comes from forest harvesting. Our ultimate goal is sustainable forestry. Reforestation and the conservation of our preserves are now essential elements of our environmental policy. Seeking to maximize the economic return to Solomon Islanders, we are reviewing the process of granting licences and considering the

establishment of facilities for lumber processing entirely within our country.

Sustainable development in the Solomon Islands requires electrification, especially by means of solar and hydro energy. Whether to enhance rural life or to open new industries, electrification is essential. My Government is giving energy resource development high priority.

Embracing the purposes and principles of the Charter, Solomon Islands has on several occasions at the United Nations called upon the Republic of China on Taiwan and the People's Republic of China to take the necessary steps towards opening negotiations to achieve reunification. The Government of the Republic of China is committed to the peaceful and equitable reunification of China. Peaceful reunification is also the stated goal of the People's Republic of China. Both parties have offered strikingly similar proposals. Yet there has been no decisive movement towards negotiation. Delay makes them ever harder to initiate, increases tension across the Taiwan Strait and threatens international peace and security. Responsibility for peaceful reunification rests with the two parties and the international community. Bringing about and successfully completing negotiations will be a long and difficult process that would be greatly assisted by the participation of the Republic of China in the United Nations. The Republic of China, which is fully committed to the purposes and principles of the Charter, has the means to be an active contributor to the Organization's work.

Regrettably, threats have been made and actions taken against Solomon Islands and other Member States that have spoken on behalf of the Republic of China. Even the use of force against us has been threatened, in violation of the Charter's principles and the letter and spirit of numerous General Assembly resolutions. Threats have no place at the United Nations.

Finally, as we enter the twenty-first century, a more effective Organization requires the participation and dedication of all sectors of civil society. Let us renew our pledge to cooperate with the United Nations. It is time to join hands in shaping the present for the benefit of future generations.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guinea, His Excellency Mr. Lamime Kamara.

Mr. Kamara (Guinea) (*interpretation from French*): I extend to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session the sincere congratulations of the delegation of the Republic of Guinea on his election. At the same time, I have the pleasant duty to transmit to him the warmest greetings of the people and Government of Guinea and, in particular, of the President of the Republic, General Lansana Conte.

Mr. Udovenko's wealth of experience in multilateral diplomacy, to which he has devoted a major part of his life, together with his outstanding personal qualities, ensures the success of our deliberations. As Vice-President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, and because of the long-standing and excellent relations of friendship that link my country with his — Ukraine — I assure him of the full cooperation of my delegation.

Furthermore, I should like to express the deep appreciation of my delegation for the effectiveness and competence shown by his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, in conducting the debates of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

I should also like to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on the outstanding work he has accomplished since the beginning of his term, and on the submission on 14 July this year of his programme for reform. I should like to assure him of the confidence and support of the Republic of Guinea.

In addition, I wish to pay tribute to the former Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who deserves credit for beginning consideration of the subject.

Some have wished to call this fifty-second session the Assembly of reform, and we are in agreement. The document (A/51/950) submitted for debate, "Renewing The United Nations: A Programme for Reform", has been examined extremely carefully by my Government. We must admit that the United Nations in its current form is a long way from corresponding to the geopolitical realities of today's world. Since its creation 50 years ago, and in particular since 1989, the world has changed greatly. We cannot fail to change along with it.

It is true that results in the area of peacekeeping and international security have been extremely positive. Many major treaties and conventions have been concluded, including the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention. The international community has also made a firm and prompt commitment to the Ottawa process on banning anti-personnel

landmines, a process in which the Republic of Guinea took a particularly active part.

We should also welcome the implementation of peacekeeping operations in many parts of the world and, an extremely positive sign, an improvement in public administration, increased democracy and the strengthening of the ability of nations to promote human rights in the interests of better governance.

But, in spite of this considerable progress, many imbalances remain, major challenges are still before us and the nascent globalization is not, as a spirit of international solidarity would demand, benefiting developing countries, which have tended to fall by the wayside on the road to progress. Many countries are still labouring under the burden of debt, which is crippling their economies and thereby compromising their development efforts. In full view of the international community, thinly disguised protectionism prevents our products from gaining access to buoyant markets. When, taking one year with another, some of our products manage to overcome these barriers, they often succumb to prices stemming from rules that are sometimes fixed unilaterally or flouted with impunity. This is compounded by the harmful effects of the decline in official development assistance in spite of the Rio commitments.

So-called small arms are proliferating on our borders and are posing serious threats to the peace, security and stability of many countries.

This short list does not nearly cover all the defects we have to correct.

Courageous and consensual reform of the United Nations could help us to do away with these ills, which are compromising, through uncertainty, the future of many nations represented here. We must reassure our peoples, not just by drafting new standard-setting instruments that are legally binding on us all, but, above all, by taking drastic action, channelling our will and joint efforts to change the situation on the ground.

The spirit of the Marshall Plan, which the United Nations should espouse, should not die with the century that saw its birth.

For all these reasons, the Republic of Guinea approves the reform proposed by the Secretary-General. For all these reasons it is also deeply involved in the debate that will make it a reality. We will not go into all the positive aspects here; we will simply confine ourselves to a few points, especially those that directly affect developing countries.

I begin with the economy, the new cornerstone of the system after disarmament. Several economic measures go in the right direction. We support the initiative to create a United Nations Development Group, an Office of Development Financing and a new system for multi-year pledges for development cooperation thanks to savings on administrative expenses, the first fruits of reform.

The same applies to strengthening the role of the Economic and Social Council and promoting dialogue with the technical ministries of our countries to give impetus to macroeconomic policies. We also set great store by the proclamation of the International Decade to Eliminate Poverty and especially in concrete measures to eradicate the evil of poverty.

The Republic of Guinea puts women and children at the heart of its development, and welcomes the attention given to the promotion of women and children.

In the same vein, Guinea supports the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa.

My delegation supports other aspects which are equally important for the restructuring under consideration, especially the merger of institutions in the Organization with similar activities, such as the creation in Vienna of a single Office to combat transnational crime, drug-trafficking and terrorism, evils we should all fight against wherever they may rear their head, and the amalgamation of the Centre for Human Rights with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The problem of the environment knows no boundaries. If we are not careful, this may be the greatest danger we face, since many perils are lurking, smouldering beneath the surface of the anarchy in this matter. It should be the sacred duty of the international community to ensure the lasting health of our planet for ourselves and for future generations. This is why we welcome the organization of a special session on the environment and development.

We have presented the proliferation of small arms as a subject of concern to African countries. These weapons, which unfortunately lend themselves to all types of conflict, large or small, pose a real danger. We therefore strongly support the idea of creating a Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation. If it is to be fully effective, it should be given adequate resources and genuine power to monitor the cross-border movement of these weapons.

What is true of the Organization as a whole is even more true of the Security Council. The times we live in have made its reform essential. Nevertheless, when we deal with this important and delicate issue, we should avoid confrontation between regions and different groups and try not to resort to useless polemics. On the one hand, we should perhaps understand that we will not be able to do everything at once, or else we will stymie the debate. Our main goal should be significantly to change a status quo which we all feel has had its day. On the other hand, if we put ourselves in the shoes of those who are enjoying permanent seats and the right of veto, we should recognize that it is difficult, even human, but not impossible, to agree to give up, without a fight, the considerable advantages won after the war after a brave struggle.

But, once peace has been achieved, it would be pointless if time were not able, after half a century, to heal the wounds of defeat and cast out the memories of war. Security Council reform must be one of the major proofs of a reconciliation patiently achieved. This is only one aspect of the issue.

If the desire to disarm is sincere and universally shared by all members of the international community, as decisive progress could lead us to hope is the case, then the concept of power should no longer be measured by a country's mass destruction capabilities.

After the cold war, the end of the arms race and of the confrontation of ideologies, the struggle — perhaps we should say "competition" — is shifting to other arenas, particularly the economic arena and ensuring people's happiness. In the process, many countries which not long ago were considered small because of the size of their economies are outstripping nations which have seen their former glory fade.

The formidable progress in communications has inexorably reduced distances and gulfs separating the levels of knowledge and development in the different parts of the world.

Together, let us square up to these new realities, with justice and democracy as our point of reference but above all, with a clear view of humanity united on the basis of a fruitful and trusting partnership, ensuring progress and well-being for all. And let us courageously decide now on what is possible, even if it means postponing matters until the year 2000, when we can put the finishing touches to what we will not have done today.

In the debate this session, Africa, in its constant quest for consensus, has modest ambitions. We would consider two permanent seats in the Security Council, with the same rights for all, pursuant to the resolutions of the summit in Harare, as positive results. The delegation of the Republic of Guinea will fight for this during what it hopes will be a calm and constructive debate.

The United Nations is essential for today and tomorrow. If it did not exist, we would have had to invent it.

The United Nations, as a special and irreplaceable place for 185 States to meet, work together and cooperate, must lay down rules of law recognized universally by all so that international relations can continue in a coherent, equitable and efficient manner.

Structural reform, however perfect, cannot be fully effective without adequate financing of the Organization's operations and, above all, of its activities.

Reform must necessarily be accompanied by consistent funding. Without reducing this important aspect of the question solely to the payment of the contributions owed by many countries, the delegation of Guinea wishes to state that its reaction to the statement by the President of the country that is the largest contributor was a positive one. Nevertheless, in keeping with the principle that the rules that have hitherto governed the Organization are still in effect, the payment of arrears by all Member States must precede the opening of negotiations to work out a new scale of assessments satisfactory to all.

While bearing in mind that our common destiny should be the background to our statements before the Assembly, I would like to point out that each region and subregion comes to this rostrum with its own pressing concerns.

The subregion of western Africa, to which my country, the Republic of Guinea, belongs has been shaken by two fratricidal conflicts in Liberia and in Sierra Leone.

In Liberia, the recent democratic and transparent elections held on 19 July 1997 under the aegis of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with the support of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the United Nations and such friendly countries as the United States of America, the Netherlands, Denmark and France, have been crowned with success. We welcome the Ministerial Meeting of the Special Conference on Liberia that is taking place today in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, and we hope that it will lead to the mobilization of substantial resources for the rebuilding of that fraternal country. The consolidation of peace and stability there is at stake.

The Republic of Guinea, faithful to its policy of peace and good-neighbourliness, has worked unflaggingly for the success of such efforts. For the record, it will be recalled that this is the first time that an African subregional organization, determined to shoulder its responsibilities, has managed to initiate, lead and successfully carry out a peacekeeping operation.

We would also like to salute here the support being given by the international community to ECOWAS for the restoration of constitutional legitimacy in Sierra Leone, which was the victim of a *coup d'état* on 25 May 1997.

The consequences of the conflicts in Liberia, which lasted for seven years, and in Sierra Leone, which has been going on for six years, have weighed heavily on the Republic of Guinea. These are two neighbouring countries that share hundreds of kilometres of frontiers with Guinea.

We have had to take in hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons. The Republic of Guinea, a country of 7 million inhabitants, has up to 650,000 refugees, or one tenth of its population. In taking in the refugees it has had to pay a heavy price and make enormous sacrifices. In the border areas the environment and infrastructures have deteriorated under the demographic pressure. Schools have been closed to serve as shelters for refugees. We have also had to cope with many health problems of all kinds.

Because of this exceptional situation the members of ECOWAS, meeting at Conakry on 26 June 1997, launched an appeal for emergency assistance for the Republic of Guinea. That appeal is beginning to be heeded by many countries and international organizations.Here we would like to thank most warmly the People's Republic of China, the State of Kuwait, the United States of America, France, Canada, Qatar, Italy and the Organization of African Unity, which have already demonstrated their solidarity with us.

I would be remiss if, out of a desire to inform the Assembly of the problems of western Africa, I failed to give due attention to conflicts tearing other African countries and other regions of the world asunder.

With regard to the Great Lakes region, my delegation would encourage all initiatives to establish a climate of peace and stability in that area.

Similarly, we would like to voice our concern at the deterioration of the situation in the Congo. While urging the parties to the conflict to observe the ceasefire and persevere in their efforts at negotiation, we reaffirm our support for the tireless efforts being made by all those of goodwill to reach a settlement of that crisis.

Turning to Western Sahara, the Republic of Guinea welcomes the appointment of a new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and hopes that the personal input of that diplomat will foster the peaceful implementation of the United Nations settlement plan.

Other parts of the world are also experiencing unrest that threatens international peace and security. We shall confine ourselves here to the situation in the Middle East. The Republic of Guinea encourages the efforts being made to find a just and lasting settlement in the Middle East. Notwithstanding current difficulties, we must persevere. Peace, a just and equitable peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours, is essential. Peace will remake that region in the interests of all its peoples and turn it into a magnet for all the nations of the world. The only way to achieve that is through negotiation.

In the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, Africa is increasingly shouldering its own responsibilities. This new approach is in keeping with current developments, and the international community should encourage and support it.

The Republic of Guinea, which pursues a policy of peace and economic development under the leadership of a man of peace and tolerance, the President of the Republic, Brigadier General Lansana Conté, will be

prepared, as in the past, to bear its share of responsibility for solving African problems.

A dark cloud always has a silver lining.

It is comforting to note that life on the African continent is not confined to crises and conflicts. The struggle of African peoples to emerge from poverty has made striking progress in recent years. The needs of economic development have compelled all African countries to adapt their State institutions and redirect their policies to cope with the changes of the new era.

Today, there are many bilateral and multilateral initiatives to help Africa get off the ground. Most of those initiatives draw on the lessons of the past and, happily, avoid the imposition of patterns or stereotypes; they take into account the real needs of the African people, who are increasingly involved in the choice of development plans and programmes. Measures to convert, suspend or write off debts are part of that process.

We face major challenges, whose diversity and complexity concern us and call for urgent solutions commensurate with the expectations and aspirations of our peoples. The Republic of Guinea is confident that the current session will produce decisions enabling our Organization fully to carry out its noble mission as we approach the third millennium.

I conclude on that note of hope and optimism.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen, His Excellency Mr. Adbulkarim Al-Eryany.

Mr. Al-Eryany (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to extend to Mr. Udovenko our heartfelt congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We are confident that his experience and wisdom will contribute to the successful and efficient conduct of the deliberations of the Assembly and help us achieve our desired objective.

I am also pleased to address our thanks and appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, Permanent Representative of sisterly Malaysia, for the manner in which he conducted the work of the previous session.

I take this opportunity to express my country's appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his valuable efforts in serving the interests of the international community, strengthening international peace and security and striving to attain the noble principles and objectives of the United Nations.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the positive and important role he played in carrying out the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations Secretariat.

If we were to define the general trend characterizing the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, we would say it is the great attention paid to the Secretary-General's report on the financial and structural reforms of the United Nations and its related agencies. This points to the fact that the Secretary-General's reform proposals are of great significance and not just an ordinary matter. Indeed, they aim at preparing the Organization to usher in the twenty-first century with more vigour and competence, thus enabling it to achieve the noble objectives of the Charter.

The Republic of Yemen, in principle, supports these proposals. However, we have to underline certain basic considerations that should not be forgotten or overlooked under the rubric of financial and administrative reforms of the Organization. It is first and foremost necessary to emphasize that the purpose of these reforms should be to reinforce the United Nations ability to shoulder its responsibilities within the framework of the noble objectives for which it was established under the Charter, which we all have accepted and pledged to abide by.

As a least developed country itself, the Republic of Yemen expresses its concern regarding some indications in the report that the United Nations role in the field of development may be reduced and its responsibilities limited in the field of social justice and the task of narrowing the huge gap that separates the developing and developed industrialized countries — all on the pretext that some of these responsibilities have been shifted elsewhere.

Any move in this direction is bound to encourage certain dangerous phenomena that we have been witnessing of late, including legal and illegal emigration from developing to developed countries, that could sow the seeds of social, ethnic and cultural conflict. Any

diminishing of the United Nations role in development will lead to an increase in the population of developing countries, which, in the absence of such basic needs as food, clothing and shelter, could lead to a further deterioration of the environment.

For these reasons, we would like to confirm in the name of the Republic of Yemen that the development tasks undertaken by the United Nations and its related agencies constitute an integral part of the main objective behind its establishment: to achieve international peace and security on this planet.

With regard to the question of reforming and expanding the Security Council, which has been under much discussion for some time and is referred to in the Secretary-General's report, we strongly support the expansion of the representative basis of the Council, either by accepting Japan and Germany as new permanent members or by increasing the number of permanent members through an increase in the representation of geographic groups and by allowing each group to rotate its permanent seat among the countries of that group.

We support what has been said about the need to reduce the use of the power of veto by permanent members. Indeed, its use should be limited to matters that directly affect the highest national interests. In this way, we can avoid the arbitrary use of the veto power in matters that are irrelevant to such interests, but affect narrow regional calculations or temporary political gains unrelated to issues of international peace and security.

It is known to all that our Organization was created in 1945 to implement the principles of its Charter, which stipulates that its main task is to maintain international peace and security, settle international conflicts, protect human rights and the dignity of man and respect the commitments emanating from international conventions and pacts.

During the 50-plus years of its life, this Organization has witnessed ethnic and national wars and conflicts as well as rivalries and polarizations that have led to controversies because of what was then known as the cold war between the super-Powers. No one can deny the fact, however, that the wars that raged from Latin America in the west to the African continent and even to East Asia have indeed subsided, thanks to the undeniably worthy efforts of the international Organization itself and of efforts made from outside the Organization, but mostly under its umbrella.

Yet, one important question that threatened peace and security in our region even before the creation of this international Organization still constitutes a looming danger to international peace and security. It is the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict, with all its complexities. The international Organization has failed to solve this question and has been forced to be a mere onlooker before the various attempts that have been made but have yet to reach a comprehensive, durable and just peace.

The displacement of millions, the occupation of their territories, the establishment of settlements, the confiscation of their properties, the arrest of tens of thousands of Palestinians and the violation of their most basic human rights, all of which result from the Arab-Israeli conflict, constitute a flagrant breach of all the noble principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and a challenge to the resolutions of international legitimacy emanating from the Security Council and this Assembly.

We believe that it is the right of all people in general, and of every citizen in the Middle East in particular, to speculate about the secret behind the inability of the international community to tame a State whose population is less than half the population of this city in which we are meeting to adopt legitimate international resolutions.

Even more peculiar is that, when a candle of hope flickered and lit the dark fierce night of the struggle that started early this decade — that is, when the world felt some optimism following the announcement of the Oslo agreement, the signature of the Jordanian-Israeli peace agreement and the progress achieved in the talks on the Syrian track to a stage described by President Hafez Al-Assad of Syria as at times encompassing fewer points of divergence than of convergence — after that slim beam of hope, the new Israeli Government came all of a sudden to extinguish it and decided to send the whole region back to square one: conflict and destruction.

On the other side of the spectrum of what is being called today the "new world order", we are all asked, and without exception, to implement the harshest sanctions against the Iraqi people, even seven years after the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Can anyone tell us which lands the Iraqis are still occupying now and why the Iraqi people should be displaced and deprived of their most basic legitimate rights? Is it not high time for the humanitarian conscience of some of us, particularly

the permanent member States, to be awakened and for an end to be put to the sufferings of the Iraqi people?

In accordance with its positive stand in support of the peace process in the Middle East, which is in line with the position of the Arab Summit Conference held in Cairo in June 1996, the Republic of Yemen reiterates its commitment to seeing the process for a just and comprehensive peace completed as stipulated by the Madrid Conference, in the resolutions of international legitimacy — particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) — and in subsequent relevant agreements and protocols, and in keeping with the principle of land for peace.

This principle would ensure the complete Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Palestinian territories; the establishment by the Palestinian people of its own independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital; the return of the Palestinian refugees; the release of prisoners; the dismantling of the settlements built by the Israeli occupation authorities in the occupied territories in defiance of the resolutions of international legitimacy; and full withdrawal from occupied Golan and occupied southern Lebanon.

Furthermore, we affirm that Israel should respect the sovereignty of brotherly Lebanon, should release the Lebanese prisoners and detainees in the Israeli camps, and should compensate Lebanon for all the damages caused by the Israeli aggressions against its peoples and lands.

Since it gained its unity and strove to consolidate the democratic direction it has adopted, the Republic of Yemen held the second parliamentary elections on 27 April this year. The elections took place in a free and fair atmosphere, as confirmed by national and international observers. These elections will have positive effects at all levels — national, regional, Arab and international — for they represent a new and advanced turning point in strengthening the democratic direction that is based on a multi-party political system, freedom of the press, respect for human rights, and the institutional consolidation of the modern Yemeni State.

Our people is still waging its most important and most difficult struggles to implement the programmes set up by the newly elected Government and approved by the elected house of representatives. These programmes focus on pursuing reform efforts — economically, financially and administratively — and on continuing cooperation with the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

In this regard, our objectives are to correct the economic, financial and structural imbalances; to achieve steadiness and stability in the economy as a whole; to activate the role of the private sector in the competitive free-market economy; to achieve sustainable development; to foster stable environments so as to attract foreign investments; to upgrade the basic necessary services of society; and to build the new State and improve the standards of living of all citizens.

Following these elections and the formation of a new Government, Yemen has persisted in its efforts in the implementation of the advanced stages of its economic and administrative reform programmes. These programmes have been welcomed by the international financial institutions and by the Brussels conference of donor countries, which pledged $1.8 billion in support of the Yemeni Government's efforts over the next three years. Our thanks go to all donor Governments and organizations that have manifested their support for and solidarity with the Yemeni people.

The British Prime Minister Henry Palmerston is reported to have said that the foreign policy of a country is the reflection and expression of its internal policy. And since economic and social development constitutes the backbone of the internal policy of the Republic of Yemen, the success or failure of the Yemeni foreign policy could therefore be measured by its ability or inability to bring in foreign support in order to realize the main objective of its internal policy.

This leads me to say that a country such as Yemen, which mainly depends on foreign aid to carry out its internal policy — that is, its economic, social and cultural development — has to take into account, in seeking the financial and technical assistance needed to achieve the objectives of the internal policy, certain basic considerations that might seem to others supplementary and not mandatory.

Allow me to say in this respect that within the parameters of a foreign policy there exists a red line that should not be violated when realizing an internal objective. Most important among these considerations is the need to safeguard sovereignty and not to become mortgaged to others when seeking national interests. Foreign support should not be sought at the expense of the regional and international commitments of the

country. Correspondingly, there are also certain basic considerations that are unanimously recognized by the international community which cannot be ignored or overlooked, as this would adversely affect the interests of that country and damage its relations with the international community. Included in those considerations is the need to abide by international pacts and conventions and to respect human rights.

Equally, the fight against terrorism and violence in all their forms and manifestations, regardless of their origins or perpetrators and regardless of where they are committed, has become a basic consideration that cannot be overlooked by any country seeking foreign assistance or even mere acceptance by the international community.

In a similar manner, the relation between a Government and its citizens has a direct and strong bearing on its relations with the donor countries that are to provide assistance and support. We need not be too idealistic, however, for the requirements of national interest of some donor countries have been placed above those idealistic principles. As a result many countries that have had extremely bad relations with their peoples have still managed to get a considerable amount of financial aid, although this occurred more during the cold war than now.

The Republic of Yemen is therefore fully committed to the consolidation of security and stability at both regional and international levels. This can best be reflected in its position regarding its conflict with Eritrea and its endeavours to solve border problems with its neighbours in a peaceful manner.

The Republic of Yemen supports the process of a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East and the principle of land for peace. But, like other Arab countries, it categorically rejects the principle of peace for peace.

The Republic of Yemen has condemned all forms of terror, be it terror committed by an individual, by a group or by a State.

These are the foundations and the principles of the foreign policy of the Republic of Yemen.

At the internal level, the relation between the Government and its citizens is based, as I said before, on constitutional legitimacy; on equality among all citizens, whether male or female; on equality in rights and obligations of men and women alike; on the freedom of individuals and groups; on the freedom of association to parties, trade unions and civilian community organizations; on freedom of the press; and on the protection of human rights.

On the basis of its deep understanding of the noble principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Republic of Yemen is pursuing a foreign policy that is based on mutual respect, positive cooperation, common interests, rejection of violence in international relations, peaceful coexistence, maintenance of security and stability, good neighbourliness, and consolidation of the role of Yemen in attending to the needs of our nation and in standing for the causes of righteousness, justice and peace in the world under the wise leadership of His Excellency President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

In this regard we are satisfied with the results of our efforts to improve our relations and to cooperate with our brothers and friends. Here we take pride in having been able to solve the border problem between our country and the sisterly Sultanate of Oman, and to reach a final solution acceptable to both parties. This can be an example to be followed by brothers and neighbours in solving border problems.

This is what we are trying to do now with our brothers and neighbours in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We hope that we will be able to achieve what we all are looking for: to serve the interests and aspirations of our two brotherly and neighbourly peoples and to consolidate stability and peace in the region.

With the aim of reaching a peaceful solution that safeguards legal, historical and geographic rights, the Republic of Yemen has endeavoured to avoid escalation and to dissipate tension. It has demonstrated a sincere desire and exerted great efforts both in dealing with the Eritrean occupation of the Yemeni Greater Hanish island in the Red Sea in mid-1995 and all along in the negotiations between the two countries. We did not rush to use force, but rather have sought to pursue all peaceful ways and means. We have opted for dialogue through official mediation and international arbitration in order to save our neighbouring peoples the scourge of war.

While the Republic of Yemen expresses its solidarity with the brotherly Somali people, the Yemeni leadership represented by His Excellency President Ali Abdullah Saleh has added its efforts to those of the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) to achieve peace in Somalia. Just last August,

President Saleh received the United Nations envoy to Somalia when he visited to our capital. At that time the Republic of Yemen expressed its special interest in the Somali question and discussed its efforts to find a suitable solution to the conflict in Somalia, not only in view of the historical and social links between Yemen and Somalia, but also in view of the negative effects this crisis could have on our countries and the fact that thousands of Somali refugees have come to Yemen.

The Republic of Yemen has affirmed its readiness to cooperate with the United Nations with a view to normalizing the situation in Somalia and enabling that country to become an active member of the international community. Our joint efforts have resulted in noticeable progress in this respect. Our political leadership has received a number of Somali leaders and has sought to solve outstanding differences in Somalia. This is because of our belief in the need to safeguard the unity and territorial integrity of Somalia and to achieve justice and equality among its citizens.

From this rostrum we hereby call upon our Somali brothers to take the initiative themselves and to demonstrate a greater political will and sincere desire to find a peaceful solution to the conflict and to attain stability so that Somalis can restore their national institutions and reconstruct their country. In this way it will be possible for Somali refugees to return to their regions and be resettled in their country.

We also call upon the international community to increase its effort and to provide the necessary assistance and support to rebuild the State institutions within a framework of national consensus that is acceptable to all Somalis.

When we met last year Yemen welcomed the memorandum of understanding that was signed between Iraq and the United Nations in May 1996 to implement Security Council resolution 986 (1995) on the oil-for-food formula, it being the first step to alleviate the sufferings of the Iraqi people. Yemen was optimistic that this agreement, which was reached after arduous negotiations, would be implemented without delay. But we find now that the implementation of that agreement often faces great difficulties, which has compounded the agony of the Iraqi people.

The Republic of Yemen, while reaffirming the need for Iraq to implement all the resolutions of international legitimacy and to continue its cooperation with the United Nations, finds it necessary and urgent to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people caused by the embargo imposed on that country.

This leads me to talk about the air embargo and other measures imposed on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and about the damages and sufferings inflicted upon the brotherly Libyan people in consequence of this unfair embargo. We would like to affirm our call for an end to this embargo in the context of the resolutions of the League of the Arab States, the Organization of African Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Concerning Sudan, my country would like to express its happiness about and support for the new developments and changes regarding the Khartoum peace agreement, which should receive the support and backing of the United Nations and the international community.

We in the Republic of Yemen look with much admiration and respect on the way in which democratic elections were held recently in the Islamic Republic of Iran. We congratulate its new President on his election, and we applaud its Government for the approach it has adopted towards the region. However, we call upon our brothers in the Islamic Republic of Iran and in the United Arab Emirates to continue their direct dialogue in order to reach a final and peaceful solution to the question of the three islands, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, the principles of international law and the principle of good-neighbourliness.

The maintenance of international peace and security, the achievement of sustainable development and respect for human rights depend, first and foremost, on the political will of the Member States of this Organization. Yet the selectivity used by the powerful Members of the Organization in dealing with others will strip the new world order, whose characteristics are not yet ascertainable, of its humanity and the justice to which we all aspire. Therefore this rostrum and this Organization represent the real safety valve for the security and safety of all mankind.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Destin-Arsène Tsaty-Boungou, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Francophonie of the Congo.

Mr. Tsaty-Boungou (Congo) (*interpretation from French*): I wish to congratulate the President on his brilliant election to the presidency of the fifty-second

session of the General Assembly. This election is both a sign of the respect his country enjoys in the international community and a tribute by the Members of our Organization to his qualities as a diplomat and his outstanding experience in the United Nations system. All of this is, undoubtedly, assurance that efficiency will mark his presidency and a guarantee that the work of the session will be successful. My delegation would also like to express its full gratitude and congratulations to Mr. Udovenko's predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for his outstanding, imaginative and effective work, in particular regarding his numerous initiatives — especially the initiative that gave a decisive impetus to the reform of the Security Council.

The Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, has, in a very short space of time, done considerable work, in particular in the area of reform. The results of this work will bring a new perspective to the work and objectives of our Organization.

I must tell this Assembly that my sorrow is great because so many Congolese children, men and women have fallen every day since 5 June 1997, under the crossfire of shells in the civil war that has cast a pall over my country. Therefore, with the indulgence of the General Assembly, I wish to devote my comments to this tragic situation.

But what a dilemma confronts me at this rostrum! As a Minister, I might be tempted to paint a picture of propaganda, of oversimplification, of extremism and exclusively of governmental platitudes. The intellectual and the patriot I would wish to be must go beyond diplomatic convention and express what I feel in my heart — my deepest convictions — which are undoubtedly shared by other Congolese of my generation.

They feel, as I do, great sorrow for all the victims who continue to fall in the camp of President Lissouba and in that of former President Sassou-Nguesso. And they feel strongly, as I do, that the international community has left them to their own devices to face this tragedy. And yet in my country, which today is in the grip of civil war, almost everything has been done since the sovereign national conference to spare our young democracy from the tragic upheavals inherent in any sudden social change, which in this case consisted of the move from a single-party political regime banning any organized opposition to a veritable explosion of freedoms — individual, political and religious.

The Constitution, the charter of national unity and the entire institutional and legislative framework set up since the transition period, which lasted for more than a year, fall within this framework. The holding of transparent, free and fair elections — and in particular the presidential election, which put President Pascal Lissouba at the helm of the State with more than 61 per cent of the vote — was the harbinger of an outstanding future for the process of democratization in the Congo.

Moreover, President Lissouba has since his election focused on establishing mechanisms to consolidate our young democracy. In his quest to establish national dialogue and social peace, President Lissouba, immediately following his inauguration, launched an appeal to the opposition to participate in the government of the Republic. That offer, whose purpose was to correct or at least minimize certain constitutional restrictions, was rejected by the opposition. From that point on, for the opposition each lost election became grounds for contention and conflict. This has further distanced it from political power and endangered the future of its own leaders.

The war that has brought bloodshed to Brazzaville, our capital, is the culmination of the rejection by one party of our political class to accept the rules of democracy. The seeds of this war can be found in the economic problems and difficulties of the country. Faced with this war, we understand — though of course we do not share — the indifference of the international community to the fate of several thousand Africans, lost in one corner of the globe. The concern of the great economic Powers lies in preserving the richness of the soil and the subsoil of that area, and the lives of its inhabitants mean little to them.

But there are lessons to be learned from this indifference. It has caused us to look at ourselves as if in a mirror, in order better to understand the place that Africans really hold in the community of nations. It has also taught us that while patriotism could be a value commonly shared by Africans, the cruel reality of Africa, at least a part of it, is that it counts only for its wealth. So in times of political setback, Africa can expect from the international community only indifference at the outset and condescending judgements later on. Often, and belatedly, the only consideration it receives is to be reminded of the human rights violations perpetrated in wartime by conflicting parties.

But that right to judge, which we readily recognize for other peace-loving and democracy-loving peoples, does it not in turn imply a duty on the part of those who, in time of war, stand by silently, failing to provide humanitarian assistance to a people threatened with death and extinction? The people of the Congo, who have, since 5 June 1997, been dying slowly under fire from rockets and cannons — bought by the Congolese, yes, but sold to them by Western "philanthropists" — do they not deserve to benefit from that much-vaunted right to humanitarian intervention?

We refuse to believe that, in the framework of our Organization, whose solid, founding values include the principle of justice and equality among peoples, this right to humanitarian intervention, which on a global scale involves an obligation to solidarity and to safeguard life, applies only to certain colours or geographic locations, depending on the colour or the geographic location of the victims. If that belief were to be a certainty, or even to exist, then it would — at least for some of the Members of our Organization — undermine needlessly and in a lasting way the legitimate trust that so many peoples, the innocent victims of atrocities and injustice, have placed in the United Nations.

Some Members of this Organization are tempted to say that the Congolese must solve their problems themselves, and we must take this appeal to our sense of responsibility into consideration. Yet while today it is the Congolese people who are hostages, perhaps tomorrow it will be another people's turn to be taken hostage by a political class that is driven by selfish ambitions, unprepared to accept the rules of democracy and uninterested in seeking and maintaining peace.

Every day and at an increasing human cost, the excessive demands of some and the lack of tolerance of others defer to a later date the establishment of conditions for a negotiated peace. That is what happened at Libreville during the second week of September 1997. President Pascal Lissouba agreed with President Omar Bongo, President of the international mediation committee, on a plan for the country to be run by a presidential college composed of the incumbent President of the Republic and three Vice-Presidents. But many Congolese saw in this proposal an effort at power-sharing among those individuals vying for power in the Congo and, hence, an end to the war.

Unfortunately, their hopes were dashed as a nightmare scenario unfolded. In response to this proposal from the international mediation committee, the United Democratic Forces of former President Sassou-Nguesso demanded that the First Vice-President be one of their own and that he exercise also the functions of Prime Minister of Minister of Defence. Such a demand, in view of the political history of our country, marked as it is by numerous *coups d'état* that to this day still have supporters, could not be accepted by the Government nor by the other parties of the most representative opposition.

Following that refusal by former President Sassou-Nguesso, a new Government was formed. Mr. Bernard Kolélas, Mayor of the city of Brazzaville and leader of the opposition, was appointed head of that new Government. Several ministerial posts were reserved for the former single party, the Congolese Labour Party of former President Sassou-Nguesso.

To date, this effort to join the Government has also been rejected by the armed opposition. What is to be done?

The Government continues to believe in the virtue of dialogue and not in the force of weapons. That is why it continues to hope that the efforts of the International Mediation Committee will offer the Congo a chance for lasting peace, and for a transition managed jointly by the various political forces of the country so that our people can freely elect its President.

With the goal of finding this negotiated solution, President Pascal Lissouba and Prime Minister Bernard Kolélas recently signed the ceasefire plan proposed by the International Mediation Committee. To date, only Mr. Sassou-Nguesso has not signed.

When those who make secret contributions to fratricidal massacres and destabilization in some democratic States, guided by their own interests, invoke the principle of non-interference as a pretext to give them greater freedom to manoeuvre, should we not fear that here non-interference may well become, given the complaisance and the silence of the United Nations, the worst form of interference against these massacred peoples and these destabilized States?

Just about a year ago, speaking before this same Assembly, I questioned the relevance of applying the rule of rotation of power in the context of democratization in our countries, which are economically weak and whose political classes have for a long time gained their fortunes and their social ascendancy exclusively from political actions. The events in my country, unfortunately, give

greater meaning to this question. We are called upon to understand better our contemporary political history and the need to share power in order to ensure a lasting peace and to better ensure the success of the democratic regime.

In the economic and historical context of some African countries, this approach towards democracy, with the development of respect for its basic needs, can be a factor for peace and development, instead of being a factor for destabilization and a vehicle for heightened ethnic hatreds during elections, as in the case today in my country.

This is a fundamental question, and undoubtedly my country, today at war, will be able to answer it by finding the road of reason, peace and pursuit of the democratic process. The road leading to democracy in my country, which has for a long time been under the yoke of a single-party regime that flouted freedoms under a quickly abandoned ideology, has been seen as a crossroads by our people.

The opposite would have been preferred but surprising, because the single-party regime and totalitarianism cannot disappear without jolts or resistance.

Our struggle — that of all the Congolese who believe in the values of democracy, in the development of the human being in a democracy, in the unleashing of greater intelligence and energy in our country thanks to democracy and its regime of freedom will be in vain if the international community — primarily the United Nations — does not show us any sign of the solidarity that could, once and for all, in spirit and in fact, do away with the temptation to resort to weapons to gain power.

The Government of the Republic of Congo wishes to express once again its regret and its great compassion to the Government and to the brotherly people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the damage and loss of life resulting from the Brazzaville war. We are convinced that the peoples of the two Congos, who have already shed too much blood and too many tears in their history and in their return to a state of law, wish to live in peace together.

That is why this situation has shown us how urgent it is for all peace-loving and democracy-loving forces to come to the aid of the Congolese as quickly as possible in order to find a solution to return peace to Brazzaville and to spare the entire subregion the further spread of destabilizing acts and war.

We greatly appreciate the commitment of some Governments that, in view of the Congolese tragedy, have made known their readiness to provide troops that could constitute a multinational interposition force, given the procrastination of the United Nations.

The wounded and the dead in our own country have helped us better understand and better regret such suffering in the rest of the world. We wish here to express our feeling of solidarity with all other peoples that are suffering, the Algerian people in particular. There again, our hope is that reason will prevail over any other consideration so that Algeria can pursue its economic development.

I wish to conclude by affirming that the political determination to restore peace to Brazzaville exists. However, the return to peace is made difficult in the field by the fact that any deliberate or uncontrolled shooting might, at any moment, lead to a further escalation of violence and might endanger numerous human lives. These acts are committed with such ease, irresponsibility and impunity that there is no neutral international force in Brazzaville that can determine who is responsible.

We believe that the presence of the troops of the multinational force envisaged by the Secretary-General, which was never established, would have enabled us to move more quickly and more surely towards lasting peace.

May our appeal for help be heard, or may it result in greater understanding for future calls of distress. And may my comments from this rostrum resonate within each of us, like an echo in this General Assembly, to spare other African peoples from ever suffering the torments of war or the dictatorship of a handful of lawless and faithless politicians, with wheelers and dealers on all sides who are themselves lawless and faithless.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Tanç (Turkey): In reply to the speech of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece on 26 September, I wish to state the following: that statement contains false accusations and misrepresentations of facts concerning Turkey.

The General Assembly is an august body where international issues are debated with a view to their resolution. However, unfortunately, it has long been a practice of Greece to exploit the general debate for propaganda purposes and to disseminate misleading information about significant issues between Turkey and Greece.

The general state of mind that shaped the portion of the statement concerning my country was perhaps reflected in the words the Minister used when he spoke to a Greek television station one day before his speech to the United Nations. Then, with reference to presumably imaginary interlocutors on the Turkish side, and without any rational reason, he said that he would not negotiate with a "murderer, rapist and thief" — hardly words befitting a statesman or this Assembly. But they are indicative of a certain mentality which robs the allegations in the Minister's speech of credibility and validity.

This approach to Turkish-Greek relations stands in stark contrast to the well-intentioned and conciliatory policy that the Turkish Government is pursuing with a view to finding solutions to the problems existing between the two countries. Turkey's positive and constructive attitude was reflected in the statement made by the Turkish Foreign Minister soon after that made by his Greek counterpart. The Turkish Foreign Minister stressed, *inter alia*,

> "In our relations with Greece, our principal objective is to promptly tackle, through a substantive and result-oriented dialogue, the issues ... that still stand between our two countries ... we have made several appeals to Greece to agree to a dialogue ...
>
> "We do not rule out any agreed method of peaceful settlement of our differences ... we have implemented unilaterally a number of confidence-building measures in the hope that they would be reciprocated. We expect that the group of 'Wisemen', consisting of two ... personalities from Turkey and Greece ... will be able to finally meet ...
>
> "We also eagerly await the translation into concrete deeds, to promote better relations between our two countries, of the understanding reached ... in Madrid last July ...
>
> "... our bilateral problems cannot be resolved by the efforts of Turkey alone, and ... mutual commitment and the display of goodwill by both parties are imperative." [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 14th meeting]

As referred to in the statement of my Foreign Minister, the Presidents of the two countries adopted a joint declaration in Madrid only a few months ago, in July, aimed at improving bilateral relations. They set up a group of "Wisemen" to study and prepare recommendations on the outstanding issues. Efforts are being made to bridge the gap between the respective positions. However, the attitude of Greece has not yet conformed to that positive mood. In fact, the Greek Government's spokesman, Mr. Reppas, made an announcement on 23 September that Greece was suspending the planned meeting between the Turkish and Greek members of the group because, he said,

> "the most suitable conditions do not exist at this time".

As the Minister made several references to international law and treaties in his statement, I would like to draw the particular attention of the Assembly to the Greek claim of different breadths of territorial sea and national airspace in the Aegean. It is an unequivocal principle of international law that the breadth of national airspace should correspond to the breadth of territorial waters, as stipulated in articles 1 and 2 of the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation. Greece's claim of an airspace of 10 miles, regardless of its 6-mile territorial sea, is a clear manifestation of Greece's disregard of international law, and is, in fact, rejected by the international community. Could the Greek Foreign Minister, who so frequently refers to the attachment of his country to international law, explain to this Assembly its stance with respect to the breadth of territorial sea and airspace in the Aegean, which is one of the elements causing friction between our countries?

Could Greece convincingly defend its violation of the status of the eastern Aegean islands, which are very clearly placed under a demilitarized regime by international treaties? Could Greece, which insists on referring the Kardak issue to the International Court of Justice, also agree to take the issue of the violation of the

demilitarized status of the eastern Aegean islands to the Court, by waiving its reservation clause, which excludes from the jurisdiction of the Court any dispute relating to defensive military actions taken by Greece, even though they violate international treaties and law?

These realities reflect the "à la carte" approach of Greece to matters of international law.

The international community is also well informed about developments in Cyprus, which has been on the United Nations agenda for 34 years. We are convinced that the international community, familiar with these issues for several decades, will easily distinguish between fact and fiction, between propaganda and truth. It is only worth wondering why, at a time when so much effort is under way to find peaceful solutions to these problems, Greece prefers to engage in acrimony and propaganda, and avoids reciprocating the hand of conciliation and friendship extended by Turkey. One wonders if Greece sees any advantage in prolonging the disputes between itself and Turkey. We wish to point out in this connection that such a policy can only be detrimental to Greece itself.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): Yesterday the Assembly heard a statement by the Foreign Minister of Burundi in which he spoke at length about the United Republic of Tanzania and its role in the search for peace in his country. In a litany of lies and self-serving falsifications, the Foreign Minister sought to ascribe to Tanzania responsibility for the problems in Burundi and the failure of the peace process so far.

While in no way seeking to answer the specific accusations levelled at my country, I wish simply to put the record straight.

Tanzania is a neighbour of Burundi. We are linked by geography, history, blood and friendship. Since independence over three decades ago, Tanzania has endured, with our brothers in Burundi, the immense suffering arising from cyclical conflicts and wars in that country. Over the years we have hosted Burundi refugees in their hundreds of thousands, and continue to do so today. We have been sympathetic to the unique problems of Burundi, notwithstanding our clear knowledge and conviction that these had their roots in politics of rigidity, extremism and exclusion practised by successive military dictatorships which have ruled that country almost uninterrupted for the last 30 years. We continued to encourage the Burundi authorities on the path of political accommodation and dialogue.

Tanzania and the rest of the international community was naturally gratified when in the 1980s the then President Buyoya initiated a political reform programme which culminated in the first democratic elections of July 1993 and the assumption of power by the Frodebu party under the late President Melchior Ndadaye. We congratulated Major Buyoya and the Burundi people on their political courage, which had permitted their country's transition from a military dictatorship to democracy.

It naturally came as a rude shock when, a few months later, the Burundi military reversed the gains of democracy. The brutal assassination of President Ndadaye and a number of his senior colleagues in the Government and Legislature were calculated to wipe out political authority and create a vacuum which could easily be filled by the military or its appointees.

Even in the face of this brutal transgression, Tanzania, and indeed the international community, did not take measures beyond condemnation. We continued to see the need to nurture the delicate transition to democratic rule there as our primary objective. The subsequent efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), through its mission in Burundi, had the full support of Tanzania.

Equally, the consultations which led to the Convention on Government and the presidency of Sylvestre Ntibantunganya had our general support. We supported that process, but not because we believed it was fair or democratic. It was a cynical process which was calculated to put a halt to the democratic transition by ascribing political roles to pseudo-parties which could not win even a single seat in Parliament, and whose membership could not exceed a handful of individuals.

It was soon to be clear that the real objective of the Convention of Government was to complete the military *coup* which had started with the murder of President Ndadaye. The internal destabilization campaigns, including the operation "Dead city" waged by the army and extremist political parties, all served to create an atmosphere of insecurity and intimidation that in turn justified high-handedness and obstruction of the political process.

Throughout this period, Tanzania remained committed to its duties as a responsible neighbour and continued to urge the Burundi politicians and the army to see reason and the imperative of political dialogue with

all segments of their society. We continued to urge the return to constitutional rule so that the country could begin the task of healing and national reconstruction.

It was in the spirit of assisting the Burundi people along the path of peace that Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, on behalf of the Organization of African Unity and the countries of the region, accepted the task of facilitating political dialogue among the warring parties within the framework of the Mwanza Peace Process. We regret the fact that, notwithstanding the great effort made, the political class in Burundi refused to commit themselves in good faith to the success of the Mwanza Process.

It was a matter of deep regret that the military, under Major Buyoya, chose to disregard international opinion and the then ongoing process within the Mwanza framework and took over power in July 1996. That act of usurpation of power was roundly condemned by Africa and the entire international community. The countries of the region met at Arusha in the aftermath of the Buyoya coup and spelt out conditions which the military rulers had to meet within a prescribed time. These included the reinstatement of the Constitution and the Parliament, the unbanning of political parties and the return of the military to their barracks. In the same vein, the first Arusha Summit reiterated the readiness of the region to continue the process of political dialogue within the Mwanza framework, under Mwalimu Nyerere, aimed at a negotiated settlement of the conflict in Burundi. Today, that remains our central objective. Indeed, the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations have been kept informed of all the developments in the region and are supportive of our efforts.

Tanzania has repeatedly stated that we have no other interest in Burundi than to assist the people of that country to live in peace with one another within their boundaries. That has been the consistent policy of the region as well. The problems of Burundi affect us. We have borne the brunt of the burden of hosting the Burundi refugees caused by the cyclical political conflicts in that country. Failure of leadership in Burundi continues to affect us adversely. It is cynical for the Burundi authorities to suggest that Tanzania would derive any advantage from the instability of their country.

The problems are in Burundi and not elsewhere. No matter how much the Burundi authorities try to bury their heads in the sand, they cannot wish away the imperative of political accommodation, power-sharing and security for all in their country. The problem is not a bilateral one between Burundi and Tanzania or with the region. The problem is within and among the Burundi people.

Tanzania has not supported, does not support, and will not support any armed aggression against Burundi by any group. The alleged armed incursions emanating from the refugee camps or military training in them are, at best, illusions created by the Burundi authorities to justify further oppression of their people. At any rate, Tanzania does not run the refugee camps and has no knowledge of such transgression of Burundi territory. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other non-governmental organizations have stated categorically that no such training is being carried out in the refugee camps. Tanzania would be happy to be furnished with evidence of such military activities so that it can put an end to them, as they would violate our sovereignty.

The presence of the refugee camps near the border is necessary and will continue. It is not to be expected of Tanzania that it create any new permanent homes for Burundi refugees. We have done so in the past — in 1965 and 1972. To do so now would be to deny the refugees the right and opportunity to repatriate early. It would also serve to countenance the irrationality of the Burundi authorities and their failure to make the necessary political amends in the mistaken belief that the refugees generated by their political irresponsibility would be shunted away from their eyes. We continue to believe that their proximity to their homeland is an incentive to an early return and poses little logistical difficulty for that process. We saw it when half a million Rwandese refugees chose to walk back home last year when they felt assured of their security.

The region, and not Tanzania, imposed sanctions against Burundi as an incentive to negotiation. The region stated that once there was reason to believe that the political process had taken an irreversible course the region would have no reason to persist in sanctions. Even without evidence of such irreversibility, the region has relaxed sanctions in order to respond to the humanitarian needs of the innocent people there. The onus now rests with the Burundi authorities to deliver their part of the bargain rather than searching for scapegoats in the form of partiality of the mediator or insecurity of the venue. Arguments of insecurity in Tanzania are fictitious. At no point was any Burundi official or negotiator harassed or threatened. Indeed, many Burundi officials come to and leave Tanzania freely, without hindrance. It hence comes as no surprise that they raise the bogey of so-called

insecurity to mask their reluctance to pursue political dialogue. We reject the allegation that Tanzania has handed over the Burundi Embassy to one party. It is not within our means as a law-abiding Government to do so. To our understanding, the present diplomat manning the Embassy is there consequent to the sharing of posts under the Convention of Government. His continued stay or departure is a matter within the competence of the Burundi authorities, and not Tanzania.

Tanzania has stated repeatedly that if the problems are the mediator or the venue, these are issues which could be discussed not with Burundi but within the region, which confirmed the mandate to Tanzania and Mwalimu Nyerere. But, ultimately, the issue is not the proliferation of forums or mediators or venues; it is one of negotiation of acceptable arrangements for political accommodation and security for all. The region or the international community cannot afford to let the present irresponsibility of the Burundi authorities plunge that country into a catastrophe. We are still too painfully aware of the horrendous genocide in Rwanda.

Tanzania remains positively disposed towards Burundi, and we will continue to assist, notwithstanding the lack of appreciation on the part of the Burundi authorities. As part of the region, we will continue to urge the military authorities to see reason and reseize the opportunity of dialogue. We invite the Burundi authorities not to persist in illusions of an internal limited settlement and to reciprocate the goodwill of the region. No partial or military solution is sustainable. If it were, we would not be talking about Burundi, which has been under military rule for decades. The enduring security of the Burundi people lies in dialogue and political accommodation, and not elsewhere.

Mr. Hermenegilde (Burundi) (*interpretation from French*): The representative of the United Republic of Tanzania said that he did not wish to engage in polemics, and I too wish to avoid them. However, I wish to state that I would prefer to give my reply and provide evidence at the beginning of next week, so that the Assembly may see the grounds for everything that my Foreign Minister said yesterday.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): We will reserve our right to reply when Burundi makes its statement.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.